410

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

S/S 10942

June 30, 1967

COPIES TO:
NEA
IAI
H
S/S-RF
Microfilm

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. WALT W. ROSTOW
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Suggested Reply to Congressman McDade

In response to Mr. Moose's request of June 23, enclosed is a suggested draft reply for the President's signature to Congressman McDade's letter of June 13 on the LIBERTY incident. However, we recommend that the letter be signed by a member of the White House staff.

Benjamin H. Read
Executive Secretary

Enclosures:

1. Suggested Reply
2. Original Correspondence

Clearances:

NEA/IAI - Mr. Atherton
NEA - Mr. Davies
H - Mr. Macomber
U - Mr. Katzenbach

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY John Kelly DATE 1/24/03
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

NEA/IAI:WDMoore:pjw:6/30/67 x4428 S/S #10942

MICROFILMED
BY S/S: CMS

UNCLASSIFIED

SUGGESTED LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN McDADE

Dear Congressman McDade:

I have received your letter of June 13 expressing your personal shock and concern, and that of members of your Pennsylvania constituency, about the June 8 Israeli attack on the USS LIBERTY. Your distress over this tragic occurence is fully shared by me.

By now I am sure you have seen the statement released June 28 by the Department of Defense based on the report of the U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry that looked into this attack. That release, a copy of which is attached, states that the LIBERTY was in international waters at the time of attack and that there was ample opportunity for the attacking forces to identify the ship as American. The ship was flying the American flag at the time of the attack.

We do not yet have the results of the official inquiry into the tragedy by the Government of Israel. After conducting this inquiry, the Israeli Military Advocate General decided to hold a preliminary judicial inquiry by a military legally-qualified judge who is empowered by law to decide on possible prosecution in the case. Meanwhile, we have been in frequent touch with the Israeli Government on this matter and, as I am sure you know, have received that government's expressions of regret for what it described as a tragic accident. Israel has offered to make amends for the loss of life and material damage. I understand that the Ambassador of Israel has sent letters of condolence to the bereaved families.

DECLASSIFIED

We saw no need to inform Israel or any other party to the hostilities of the LIBERTY's location since the ship was on a peaceful mission and was in international waters. I have seen a report alleging that the Israeli Government had asked us about the presence of the ship prior to the attack, but that report is not true.

I appreciate your writing to me, and will see that you are kept informed of future developments in the case.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson

Enclosure:

U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry Report

DECLASSIFIED

June 16, 1967

Dear Congressman:

May I acknowledge your letter of June 13 to the President regarding the attack on the LIBERTY.

Please be assured that your letter is receiving careful attention, and you may expect a further reply in the near future.

Sincerely,

Barefoot Sanders
Legislative Counsel
to the President

Honorable Joseph M. McDade
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

BS/jt

DECLASSIFIED

JOSEPH M. McDADE
[illegible] District, Pennsylvania
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON OFFICE
[illegible] House Office Bldg.
Area Code 202

DISTRICT OFFICE
Northeastern National Bk.
Scranton, Pennsylv.
Diamond 6-5534

# Congress of the United States
## House of Representatives
### Washington, D.C.

June 13, 1967

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Last Thursday the USS Liberty was attacked by aircraft and torpedo boats of the nation of Israel. I am sure you will agree that this was one of the most shocking incidents our nation has ever witnessed.

Two of the men who were killed and two who were wounded were from my own Congressional District. Even if none of these men had been from my District, I would still be immensely concerned and distressed over this incident.

I do not wish to burden you unnecessarily but there are some questions which must be raised concerning this incident and I would deeply appreciate knowing the answers.

1. Have we received a complete report from the Government of Israel on how this attack took place? If so, could you make this report available to me?

2. Contradictory statements have been made concerning whether the ship was flying an American Flag at the time of the attack. Would it be possible to clarify this point precisely?

RECEIVED

3. In moving a ship so close to the shoreline of one of the nations engaged in a shooting war, was any effort made to notify all combatant of the presence of a neutral ship lying off the coast?

4. We are informed that this is a highly sophisticated communications vessel. Will all texts of communications intercepted by this ship be released which might throw any light on this attack?

I do not have to tell you that the concern over this incident in my District is very great, indeed. I sincerely hope all of the above questions may be answered fully so that I may thoroughly inform all of my constituents on all aspects of this tragic incident.

Respectfully,

Joseph M. McDade
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

DECLASSIFIED